

FY12 ANNUAL REPORT

May 1, 2012 – September 30, 2012

**Immediate Protection and NFI Assistance to LRA-Affected Populations in Southeastern CAR
 Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)**



Girl members of a Play Therapy club in Rafai enjoy a game of limbo, which is used to educate participants on how to avoid certain risky behaviors in life. Jean-Filston Koyamouss/Mercy Corps

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
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1. Program Overview

Mercy Corps' Immediate Protection and NFI Assistance program is a \$522,013 program designed to support community structures in order to address protection issues and enhance the capacities of LRA-affected communities to develop positive coping mechanisms, restore assets and build economic livelihoods in the Mbomou prefecture of south-eastern CAR. The program targets a total 33,831 LRA conflict-affected persons, including 5,500 displaced persons as a result of the LRA conflict. The program has three main components: 1) psychosocial and capacity-building support to protect children and youth by building on existing community-based support mechanisms; 2) gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response to LRA-affected GBV survivors via psychosocial, health and economic support services; and 3) distribution of non-food item (NFI) kits to internally displaced (IDP) and

returnee households in the intervention zone. The program places an emphasis on leveraging previously established community-based mechanisms, such as child protection committees, 'Sports for Peace and Life' mentors who help educate children on HIV/AIDS and conflict negotiation, and GBV focal points who raise awareness on GBV prevention, refer survivors to the support center. The program also empowers beneficiaries to play an active role in the implementation of activities.

2. Beneficiaries

	Number of Beneficiaries Targeted in 2012	Number of Beneficiaries Reached in 2012	Cumulative Number of Beneficiaries Targeted	Cumulative Number of Beneficiaries Reached
Sub Sector 1: Child Protection	Play Therapy Mentors : 36	Play Therapy Mentors : 36 (7 females, 29 males)	Play Therapy Mentors : 36	Play Therapy Mentors : 36 (7 females, 29 males)
	Child Protection Committee Members: 100	Child Protection Committee Members: 92 (57 males, 35 females)	Child Protection Committee Members: 100	Child Protection Committee Members: 92 (57 males, 35 females)
	Number of children and youth participating in play therapy clubs: 540	Number of children and youth participating in play therapy clubs: 540 (270 girls, 270 boys)	Number of children and youth participating in play therapy clubs: 540	Number of children and youth participating in play therapy clubs: 540 (270 girls, 270 boys)
Sub-Sector 2: Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response	Number of target survivors receiving psychosocial support services: 125	Number of target survivors receiving psychosocial support services: 105 (104 females, 1 male)	Number of target survivors receiving psychosocial support services: 125	Number of target survivors receiving psychosocial support services: 105 (104 females, 1 male)
	-OF WHICH- Number of cases referred to partner medical centers for treatment: 30 cases referred	-OF WHICH- Number of cases referred to partner medical centers for treatment: 15 cases referred (14 females, 1 male)	-OF WHICH- Number of cases referred to partner medical centers for treatment: 30 cases referred	-OF WHICH- Number of cases referred to partner medical centers for treatment: 15 cases referred (14 females, 1 male)
	Number of women trained in income	Number of women trained	Number of women trained	Number of women trained

	generating activities: 30	in income generating activities: 30	in income generating activities: 30	in income generating activities: 30
	Number of GBV focal points trained on GBV and protection issues: 20 focal points trained	Number of GBV focal points trained on GBV and protection issues: 19 female focal points trained	Number of GBV focal points trained on GBV and protection issues: 20 focal points trained	Number of GBV focal points trained on GBV and protection issues: 19 female focal points trained
	Number of males sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 1,000 males	Number of males sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 1,748 males	Number of males sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 1,000 males	Number of males sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 1,748 males
	Number of females sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 1,000 females	Number of females sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 2,339 females	Number of females sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 1,000 females	Number of females sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues: 2,339 females
	Number of conflict-affected women trained and participating in VSLAs: 150 women	Number of conflict-affected women trained and participating in VSLAs: 120 women	Number of conflict-affected women trained and participating in VSLAs: 150 women	Number of conflict-affected women trained and participating in VSLAs: 120 women
Sector 3: Logistics, support, and relief commodities	Total number of beneficiaries receiving NFIs: 3,500 individuals	Total number of beneficiaries receiving NFIs: 0 individuals	Total number of beneficiaries receiving NFIs: 3,500 individuals	Total number of beneficiaries receiving NFIs: 0 individuals
Total Beneficiaries	6,501	5,029	6,501	5,029

3. Description of Assessments and Data Collection Used to Measure Results

Baseline and Assessment Data

The Immediate Protection and NFI Assistance program complements the UNICEF-funded Protection Measures in the Mbomou Region (Protection Measures) program, which ended in April 2012 and had the overall goal of improving child protection mechanisms, ensuring psychosocial and judicial care to survivors of GBV, and promoting women's rights and GBV prevention. At the close of this program in April 2012, a final evaluation was conducted in the target areas of Bangassou and Rafai (including Agoumar) to measure against the Protection Measures program targets and determine key achievements of the program.

The baseline data collected for the Immediate Protection and NFI Assistance program was extracted from two primary sources: 1) the Protection Measures program final evaluation for the Rafai intervention zone collected in April 2012 and 2) the baseline data collected in Dembia,

Selim, and Guerikindou by the present program collected in July and August 2012.¹ This data corresponded to the Protection and NFI sector indicators established by OFDA, as well as additional relevant indicators established by Mercy Corps to complement the OFDA indicators for this program.

The methodology for the Protection Measures program final evaluation and the baseline evaluation in Dembia, Selim, and Geurikindo included a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection through: 1) individual household surveys; 2) questionnaires using semi-informal interviews; 3) key informant interviews; 4) case studies; 5) focus groups, 6) security audits, and 7) review of internal lessons learned documents from work in the intervention zone.

Market analysis to guide income-generation trainings

A market survey was conducted by program staff to identify opportunities for supply and disposal of products, prior to the selection of female beneficiaries to participate in income generation trainings and benefit from cash transfers. The methodology used included administering a questionnaire to 30 potential beneficiary women and conducting interviews with potential suppliers, vendors, farmers and other traders. The information collected was assessed in relation to the Rafai market functions including: supply and demand for goods and services, actors or market operators (producers, distributors, retailers, and consumers), transport of goods, and market prices. Different opportunities that can be exploited by women to improve their socio-economic situation were identified, and the analysis revealed that the continued insecurity and the state of disrepair of the road from Bangui to Rafai was a constraint.

Program Surveillance Data

At program startup, a monitoring system was created in order to monitor program surveillance data. Program monitoring has been regularly conducted by all direct program staff and continued technical support was provided to project staff by Mercy Corps' in-country M&E manager. Program monitoring to-date has included:

- *Psychosocial and medical support activities:* GBV cases in LRA-affected areas receiving psychosocial and medical referral have been regularly tracked by program staff. Program trained GBV focal points continue to submit monthly activity reports highlighting number of sensitizations held and topics covered, number of community members reached via community education sessions, and number of GBV cases referred to the psychosocial support center.
- *Income generation activities:* Following the training of LRA-affected women on income generation activities, program staff have visited trained beneficiaries and tracked the evolution of their income generation activities and provide technical assistance as needed.
- *Protection committees and microprojects:* Monthly reports have been collected from each protection committee in order to track the number of sensitizations held and topics covered, number of community members reached via community education sessions, number of vulnerable children referred to the program.

Regular visits to target communities and program activities have also been performed by the program team to identify problems and maintain a high level of services to the beneficiary communities. Two quarterly reports have been submitted to OFDA during the period covered in this report, highlighting progress on activities, major achievements, difficulties encountered

¹ Given that this program was designed to serve as an extension of the Protection Measures program, it shares many of the same indicators. Because the final evaluation for the Protection Measures program was conducted in April 2012, just one month prior to the start of the current program, it was deemed unnecessary to re-conduct a baseline evaluation for the Rafai and Agoumar communities. A complementary baseline assessment was conducted following a similar methodology and using the same tools as used for the Protection Measures evaluation in order to collect data for Selim, Dembia and Geurikindo, which were not communities covered by the UNICEF-funded program.

and indicator progress. In addition, the program baseline data report was submitted, detailing the results of the program baseline data collected.

4. Successes Achieved

In re-establishing activities in the Rafai zone at program start-up, including the towns of Rafai, Agoumar, Dembia and Guérékindo, several meetings were held with local authorities, partners (local associations, other NGOs, religious organizations etc.), former volunteers, and the community to discuss major needs and the continuation of Mercy Corps activities in the region. During field missions, Mercy Corps regularly held meeting with the local authorities and other members of the community to discuss context, security issues, and the progress of activities. The program also coordinated with other NGO agencies working in the target zone, including Merlin and PU-AMI to share scheduled activities and discuss security. In general, these meetings were successful for information-sharing, and the response and feedback from communities was extremely positive. Meeting participants continually expressed support for the program and indicated that they had observed positive changes in their communities, notably increased awareness on child protection and GBV issues via the activities of protection committees and greater social cohesion as a result of participation in the program.

Feedback from cash grant recipients has been extremely positive; women have reported that the initiative has not only made them feel respected to make their own decisions about IGAs they want to engage in, but they also feel their dignity has been restored by being given an opportunity to commence IGAs in order to contribute to their family income.

5. Constraints Encountered and Proposed Solutions

The major difficulties thus far have been logistical and security barriers to road travel including access to the villages outside of the principal towns in the region, notably Dembia, Guérékindo and Selim. In the case of Selim, the ruined state of the river ferry and frequent mechanical break-downs block movement to the west of Rafai. The United Nations Common Humanitarian Fund for CAR has dedicated funding for the rehabilitation of the ferry and the surrounding roads, and construction is anticipated to begin next quarter. Program activities on the axe west of Rafai will continue as scheduled; however they may be delayed, given the frequent break-downs. Continued LRA activity in the area surrounding Dembia and Guérékindo warrants cautious road travel to these towns, and only same-day return missions were possible. This constraint spurred ideas for new strategies that would ensure meaningful impact, including extra training for dedicated “senior volunteers” in the region to assist in monitoring the activities of fellow volunteers in their region, reinforcing their capacity and aiding in the oversight of peer volunteers in the absence of Mercy Corps staff presence. To-date, a total of four senior volunteers have been trained and remain active on the Rafai – Dembia road axe, where they conduct regular field visits to monitor activities when Mercy Corps staff cannot travel due to insecurity. Upon their return to Rafai, senior volunteers submit detailed field notes and monitoring data for activities, which is verified by Mercy Corps staff when they are able to access the remote communities.

6. Changes in Program Design

No major changes have been made to the design of the program.

7. Project Performance

To date, Mercy Corps has achieved the following:

- The collection and analysis of baseline data was finalized in Rafai, Dembia, Selim and Geurikindo, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection. Results of the baseline evaluation confirmed that over one-third of people feel unsafe in their home communities and that knowledge of GBV and women’s rights is very low in communities that do not presently have protection mechanisms in place. Other needs were also identified, including food security among displaced and returnee populations, a lack of adequate water and sanitation structures in Geurikindo, Selim, and Dembia, and a need for increased access to economic opportunity via income generation,

vocational, and literacy trainings. A more detailed analysis of the results can be found in the baseline data report submitted to OFDA in September 2012.

- Trained 92 members of child protection committees (57 men, 35 women) in child protection, referral systems, and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV).
- Ten proposals (microprojects) were received from child protection committees in Rafai.
- 6,497 people reached (1,748 men; 2,339 women; 990 boys; 1,420 girls) via awareness-raising sessions on: explanation of the reference systems and mechanisms, services available at the counseling center, awareness-raising on GBV and child protection issues.
- Trained thirty-six play therapy mentors (7 female and 29 males) in August 2012. The training was based on 32 sessions using sport as a means of transmitting key messages about protecting the rights of the child and a healthy and therapeutic space for children and young people, particularly those affected by LRA conflict.
- Play therapy sessions began with all 36 youth/children groups, reaching a total of 540 children (270 boys, 270 girls). The themes of topics covered during play therapy sessions included: peace-building, effective communication, how to work together as a team, expressing and accepting emotions, how to avoid discrimination, the negative effects of violence and how to prevent violence, and finally a session on gender. Clubs learned about these themes via sports and play activities.
- A special round-table discussion for the International Day of the African Child (June 16th) was organized by the program with governmental leaders in Rafai. 53 local authorities and partner representatives participated, of which two were women. The round-table discussion was requested by local leaders to share ideas on how to better support children with special needs in the Rafai area.
- Conducted a market analysis to guide income generation activity (IGA) trainings.
- 30 female, LRA-affected GBV survivors were selected and participated in a five-day training on basic commercial skills, including how to choose a product to sell, how to calculate a net benefit or net loss, how to confront competition, the importance of maintaining their initial capital, and discussions on common pitfalls of commercial activities, such as giving away products on credit, using one's capital to respond to family emergencies, dividing product between sale and family consumption, and communication skills to resist family pressure to give away their profits. Following the training, cash grants were provided to participants in their home communities. To date, 19 of the 30 trained women have received a cash grant of amount of 45,000 XAF (\$100) each during this quarter to start their own IGAs. Feedback from cash grant recipients has been extremely positive; women have reported that the initiative has not only made them feel respected to make their own decisions about IGAs they want to engage in, but they also feel their dignity has been restored by being given an opportunity to commence IGAs in order to contribute to their family income.
- Thirty youth (20 girls and 10 boys; 14 of which are IDPs) have been selected to participate in vocational training based on specified vulnerability criteria and have chosen their type of vocational training, the courses will begin the next quarter.
- A list of NFIs has been identified and the procurement process is underway; 500 beneficiaries have been identified (IDPs and returnees).

8. Cost Effectiveness

Cost savings have been made on cell phone communication as a result of limited cellphone coverage by the telecommunication company present in Rafai. This limited cellphone coverage was due to the lack of resources for fuel and generator costs. However, given the lack of regular cellphone coverage and the instability due to security concerns in the intervention zone, the program has had cost overruns for satellite and BGAN communications.

Some savings were made on cash grants given to women trained on IGAs. The amount of each grant (45,000 XAF) was approximately equal to \$100 at the time in which the grants were

disbursed. However, due to exchange rate fluctuation, this amount today would equal approximately \$88.

9. Accomplishments against Indicators

Overall, the program is progressing as planned, however it is important to note that many of the program indicators will be measured during the final program evaluation against program targets.

SECTOR #1 Protection	<i>Objective: LRA-affected populations access protection services</i>		
Budget:	\$456,190		
Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, including the towns of Rafai, Dembia and Selim.		
Sub-Sector: Child Protection			
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS
Number of people trained in child protection issues	Play Therapy Mentors : 6 (5 males, 1 female) Child Protection Committee Members: 36 (28 males, 8 females) Total: 42 (33 males, 9 females)	Play Therapy Mentors : 36 Child Protection Committee Members: 100 Total: 136	Play Therapy Mentors : 36 (7 females, 29 males) Child Protection Committee Members: 92 (57 males, 35 females) Total: 128 (42 females, 86 males)
Number of and percent increase in number of mechanisms/systems to report/refer child protection issues	Committees: *To be determined Play therapy Mentors Pairs: *To be determined Total: *To be determined	Committees: 25; 67% Increase Play therapy Mentors Pairs: 18; 64% Increase Total: 43; 65% Increase	Committees: 0 Play therapy Mentor Pairs: 0 Total: 0
Number and percent of targeted children reporting an improvement in their sense of safety and well being	0 children	855 children 75% of targeted children	0 children
Number of microprojects implemented*	0 microprojects	25 microprojects	0 microprojects
Number and percent of youth that report increased independence after vocational training*	0 youth	54 youth 90% of trained youth	0 youth 0% of trained youth
Sub-Sector: Gender-based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response			
Number and percent of community members who can report at least two negative effects of GBV on their community	45%	70%	To be measured during final evaluation.

Number and percent of target population reporting increased access to Gender-based Violence (GBV) services	0 survivors 0% report increased access	500 survivors 75% report increased access	104 survivors 0% report increased access ²
Number of males sensitized in Gender-based Violence (GBV) issues	0 males	5,000 males	1071 males
Number of LRA-affected GBV survivors that receive psychosocial support*	0 LRA-affected GBV survivors	500 LRA-affected GBV survivors	105 LRA-affected GBV survivors (104 females, 1 male)
Number of cases referred to partner medical centers for treatment*	0 cases referred	75 cases referred	15 cases referred
Number of women who report increased economic independence after IGA training*	0 women	60 women	19 women

SECTOR #2 Logistics, support and relief commodities	<i>Objective: LRA-affected displaced and returnee households access essential NFIs</i>		
Budget:	\$65,823		
Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, including the towns of Rafai, Dembia and Selim.		
Sub-Sector: Non-food Items (NFIs)			
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS
Total number of NFIs distributed, by type	0 NFIs	Refer to Annex 1 for NFIs by type	0 NFIs
Total USD cost of NFIs, by type	0 NFIs	Refer to Annex 1 for cost of NFIs	\$0.00
Total number of beneficiaries receiving NFIs by type, in compliance with Sphere standards	0 individuals	3,500 individuals	0 individuals
Number of NFIs distributed, by type, to LRA-affected child and youth headed households*	0 NFIs	29 child / youth headed households	0 NFIs

*Program impact indicators identified by Mercy Corps

10. Reasons Why Goals/Targets were not met during this reporting period

Child Protection Committee Members

Target: 100

Beneficiaries reached: 92 (57 males, 35 females)

The target for protection committee members was not reached due to constraints recruiting enough community volunteers. Originally, it was estimated that each protection committee would have four to five members, when in reality the majority of protection committees have

² To be measured during program evaluations

three to four members each. However, the slight reduction in the number of protection committee members has not hindered the achievement of protection committee activities, and in fact the target of people reached via protection committee awareness-raising sessions has been exceeded during this reporting period.

Number of target survivors receiving psychosocial support services

Target: 125

Beneficiaries reached: 105 (104 females, 1 male)

The program experienced a slight delay in the recruitment of a psychosocial agent, the staff member responsible for providing psychosocial support services to survivors received by the counseling center. This delay was due to a lack of experienced candidates and therefore the recruitment process took longer than originally anticipated. Despite this delay, it is anticipated that targets will be met by the end of the program.

Number of GBV focal points trained on GBV and protection issues

Target: 20 focal points trained

Beneficiaries reached: 19 female focal points trained

Despite that 20 female focal points were initially trained, one focal point withdrew from participation in program activities, including conducting outreach and referrals, due to personal reasons. The woman was replaced in the period following this reporting period.

Number of conflict-affected women trained and participating in VSLAs

Target: 150 women

Beneficiaries reached: 120 women

Only four of the five anticipated VSLA groups (30 female members in each group) began their activities during this reporting period. The final VSLA group began their activities in the period following this reporting period.

Total number of beneficiaries receiving NFIs

Target: 3,500 individuals

Beneficiaries reached: 0 individuals

During this reporting period, the list of NFI items to be distributed was identified and confirmed, the procurement process launched and 500 beneficiary households (of which, 29 child/youth headed households and 309 female headed households), affected by the LRA conflict were selected (IDPs and returnees) to benefit from NFI distribution, in function of the selection criteria. NFI distributions will begin in the next reporting period once all NFI materials have been procured. It is anticipated that the project will meet the target of 3,500 beneficiaries.

11. Program Impact and Success Stories

Restoring Dignity: An interview with an LRA survivor

Interview date: September 26, 2012

Note: the identity of the young girl in this story has been kept anonymous to ensure the confidentiality of the survivor.

"In 2010, I was abducted by LRA rebels when they attacked Agoumar. I was 13 at the time. Before being taken, I went to school in my village. I loved to read and write and I thought that I would become a teacher. And then all of a sudden one day my dream was gone; I was kidnapped by the rebels and I could not go to school or do the things I once loved.

After I was taken, we walked five days and nights. Once we arrived at the LRA rebels' camp, I was presented to a man who became my husband. Every night this man raped me and I could not stand it. I spent over two years in the forest. I was unhappy and I thought of my family, my friends, my village, the field I used to work in to help my parents. I had my first child while I was in captivity, born from the encounters with the husband I was forced to marry. In 2012,

the LRA camp where I was being held captive was attacked, and I fled with my baby in my arms. We walked alone in the forest until after three days I found my way to Djema. The International Red Cross helped me reunite with my family in Agoumar.

It was difficult at first, I felt isolated even though I was back in my home. To this day, I'm still fearful of being taken again. At first, everyone in the village was scared of me and they would mock me for having been with the LRA. I felt depressed and I didn't know what to do, my spirit and dreams had been broken.

I was referred to the listening center in Rafai by the GBV focal point in my community. She saw how much I was suffering and the pain I underwent due to the mocking of people in my village. Once I arrived at the center, I was able to talk to a Mercy Corps staff member. They took me and my baby to the local hospital for medical care. Thanks to the support I received from Mercy Corps, I received counseling from the women at the center and I felt like I had regained my own dignity. I had someone I could talk to about the difficult things I experienced and after a while, I started to feel love and happiness again. Through Mercy Corps, I was enrolled in a trade school in Rafai where I am currently learning how to sew and make clothing. I have a new dream now to become a tailor, and I now have hope that I will succeed because of the help I've been given. My child is in better health now too. One thing that still makes me sad is that I know there are still many girls like myself in the hands of the LRA, and I can only hope that one day they are given the same chance as me."

Annex 1: List of Non-Food Items (NFIs) for distribution to 500 households – number, cost, type

Type of NFI	Unit Cost (USD)	Quantity per household	Total households	Total Cost (USD)
Bar of soap	0.38	4	500	760.00
Metal dinner plates	1.00	4	500	2,000.00
Metal bucket (20 liters)	2.40	1	500	502.40
Plastic sleeping mats	6.00	1	500	3,000.00
Metal drinking cups	1.00	4	500	2,000.00
Metal cooking pot (5 liters)	5.00	1	500	2,500.00
Cotton clothing items (boy age 5-12)	4.80	Average per household: 1	500	2,400.00
Cotton clothing items (girl age 5-12)	4.80	Average per household: 1	500	2,400.00
Cooking spoons	0.42	4	500	840.00
Large cooking pot (20 liters)	9.00	1	500	4,500.00
Wool blanket	8.00	1	500	4,000.00
Total				\$24,902.40